

Appendix: Seven Conditions leading to Progress: (*Satta-aparihāniya Dhamma*)

(Transcribed from Prof. Oliver's Lecture)

These conditions are mentioned in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (DN) and in the *Sattaka Nipāta* (AN). In fact, *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* has quoted these conditions from the *Sattaka Nipāta*. Therefore, the original place in which the *satta-aparihāniya dhamma* found is the *Āṅuttara Nikāya*, where these conditions are given as follows:

Ajātasattu, the king of Magadha, **wanted to invade** and overpower the **Vajjian territory**. Before he did it, he had sent the prime-minister to the Buddha informing him what the king was going to do. Both suttas say that the Buddha has never told lie. So the king ordered the prime-minister Vassakāra to inform him of the prediction of the Buddha. When **Vassakāra** went to the Buddha and delivered the king's message, the Buddha addressed **Ānanda** who was standing behind him. The Buddha asked Ānanda whether the Vajjians still adhered to the seven conditions or not. Ānanda said yes. Then the Buddha said to Vassakāra, "Once when I was at the **Sārandada shrine** in Vesālī, I taught the Vajjians these seven principles for preventing decline. If the **Vajjians still adhered to the seven conditions**, they may be expected to prosper and **not decline**." When the king Ajātasattu heard this, he abandoned the invasion plan for the time being.

This story is very important in the study of the seven conditions leading to progress for so many reasons. Firstly, even though there were various other republics in India during the time of the Buddha, these conditions were not known to them, they were known only to the Vajjians. Therefore, these conditions have nothing to do with the system of republics in the six century B.C. Secondly, in the *Dīgha Nikāya* as well as *Āṅuttara Nikāya*, it is said that the Buddha taught these conditions when he was at the Sārandada shrine (*Sārandada-cetiya*). Therefore, even the Vajjians did not know before what these conditions were. **They are the purely Buddhist teaching**. Thirdly, it is suggested that the Buddha formed the community of monks on the basis of these seven conditions. It is not true. For, before the Buddha taught these seven conditions to the Vajjians, he had already formed the community of monks. Therefore it is wrong interpretation that the Buddha learned these conditions from the political system in India during his time; but, in fact, the political system in India at that time did not know what these conditions were. Fourthly, in addition to the seven conditions leading to progress practiced in the Vajjian territory, there are various other sets of the seven conditions leading to progress in the *Āṅuttara Nikāya* as well as in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. In other words, there are all together **seven sets of the seven conditions** leading to progress. One of them was practiced in the Vajjian territory. There are six more. All these **six are meant to develop the community of monks**. These six are quite different from the set of the seven conditions practiced in the Vajjian territory.

Now, we will examine those conditions one by one.

1

(1) *abhiṇhaṃ sannipātā sannipātabahulā*: the rulers should have meetings (*sannipātā*) a lot (*bahulā*) and quite often (*abhiṇhaṃ*).

The term *abhiṇhaṃ sannipātā* means that the rulers should **meet again**, when an occasion arises, even if they had already assembled three or four times a day. The term *sannipātabahulā* means that the rulers should assemble according to the time table; but they should also be ready to meet irrespective time table on the various circumstances; meeting should not be postponed; it should be convened **outside time table**.

If the rulers do not meet in the way, they will face **three disadvantages** thus: firstly, they might not get the urgent messages at the proper time; secondly, they may not get the information of the terrorist at once; thirdly, thinking that the rulers are not vigilant, the terrorists may activate in the remote area. The opposite of them are given as the advantages: firstly, the urgent messages can be reached rulers at the proper time; secondly, the terrorist activities may not arise in the remote area; thirdly, the terrorists may think that the rulers are vigilant so that they should keep quiet for a little while. Therefore, the Buddha says that the rulers should meet **quite often** and **outside time table**.

2

(2) *samaggā sannipatanti samaggā vuṭṭhahanti samaggā vajjikaraṇiyāni karonti*: they meet in concord (*samaggā sannipatanti*); they disperse in concord (*samaggā vuṭṭhahanti*); they participate in their activities in concord (*samaggā vajjikaraṇiyāni karonti*).

These meetings were convened by beating the drums. As soon as they hear the drum beating, they should stop whatever they were doing and should go to the meeting place immediately. When the beating of the drums starts, some who may have started eating should stop eating and go to the meeting; some who may be in the process of making up should stop it and go to the meeting; some while dressing should stop it and go to the meeting. All these are the meaning of *samaggā sannipatanti*. No excuses can be given for not attending the meeting.

The term *samaggā vuṭṭhahanti* means thus: after this official meeting of the rulers, they should get up together and go out together from the meeting hall. No one should stay in the meeting place. That is because if some are left in the meeting place, those who have left the meeting place might think that those who are remained would convene another meeting. Then unnecessary doubts take place. Therefore, all the participants should leave the meeting hall after finishing the meeting. There are two kinds of talks which are referred to this condition: one is *bāhirakatha* (external talk) and the other is *abbhantarakatha* (internal talk). Those who have left the meeting hall would say that we participate only in the external talk (*bāhirakatha*) and the real talk (*abbhantarakatha*) might be held now among those who are left in the hall. Therefore, all participants should go out the meeting hall together after finishing the assembly. There is an exception. When the meeting is going on, a messenger comes to the meeting and informs the chair person that either the terrorist act has arisen in the remote area or

the foreign army has invaded the territory. Then what the chair person should do is that he should inform the essence of the message saying that now we have problem in the remote area; if there any one who would like to participate in the defend activities, they can remain the meeting place and discuss the ways to solve the problem.

The term *samaggā vajjikaraṇiyāni karonti* is that there are various activities and affairs of the members of the ruling class. They may have weddings, funerals, various other kinds of social gatherings, and illnesses; on such occasions all should participate. It is said that they should go with their spouse also; no one should go alone. The text says that what it means is that all should get together in the happy and sorrowful occasions.

3

(3) *apaññattaṃ na paññapeyya, paññattaṃ na samucchindeyya, yathā paññatte porāṇe vajjidhamme samādāya vatteyya*: what is not enacted, that is, not accepted as law (*apaññattaṃ*) should not be enacted (*na paññapeyya*); what is enacted (*paññattaṃ*) should not be violated (*na samucchindeyya*); they should abide and observe (*samādāya vatteyya*) the ancient vajjian laws (*porāṇe vajjidhamme*) which is already enacted (*yathā paññatte*).

For the first two sentences, three factors are taken into consideration here: **finest, taxes, and punishments**. What *apaññattaṃ na paññapeyya* means that fines, taxes and punishments which are not enforced **should not be introduced**. The second sentence (*paññattaṃ na samucchindeyya*) means that fines, taxes and punishment which are enforced **should not be violated**; should be adhered to. If the new fines, taxes and punishments are introduced, people would think that this government is undemocratic so that they should leave the urban area to avoid fines, taxes and punishments. When the people leave the cities and go to the remote area, the rule of law cannot be applied there as it is applied in the urban area. This is nothing but helping the terrorists. If this happen, the revenue of the government would decrease; government may not able to pay the proper salaries to the government servants, especially the army forces; if the army forces and the government servants are not paid well, they become less energetic and the army forces will lose their enthusiasm for warfare. Therefore new fines, taxes and punishments should not be introduced (*apaññattaṃ na paññapeyya*). At the same time, the fines, taxes and punishments which are enforced should be implemented (*paññattaṃ na samucchindeyya*). If it is done, the revenue of the government will increase; the government can pay the proper salaries for the government servants and the army forces.

The third sentence is *yathā paññatte porāṇe vajjidhamme samādāya vatteyya*: this is the **legal system** that the **Vajjians** have. Accordingly the suspect cannot be punished without the trial. Taking the example, if a person is caught for theft, he has to be first brought to the **minister of Justice**. He can examine the case and make the suspect discharged; that is the end of the case. If the minister of Justice thinks that there is a criminal case, he cannot describe the punishment. What he should do is to refer the case to the higher court (*vohārikā*). The term *vohāra* has a legal connotation; so *vohārikā* indicates the people who are responsible for law and order in the society. It is given in plural (*vohārikā*); that

means, at this court, there are more judges than one man. Therefore when the case goes to **the second court** which has so **many judges**; they can decide whether the person is guilty or not. If the person is not guilty, the court can discharge him; if the court finds him guilty, the case should be referred to **the third court**. That court is called *suttadharā*; again there are more judges than one judge. The term *sutta* is also connected with law; for example, the *vinaya* rules are called *sutta*. If the person is found guilty in this court, he can be sent to another court. This **fourth court** is called *aṭṭhakulika* which literally means eight families; therefore the judges are chosen from the eight families.¹ They can discharge the suspect; but if they found him guilty, the case would be referred to another higher court. There are three more courts commanded by single individual judge: **the fifth** one is called *senāpati*; the **sixth** called *yuvarāja*; **the last** one is *rāja*, the king.

In the lower court, that is, from the first to the sixth, punishment cannot be fixed; these courts are empowered to refer the case to the highest court; only the king can punish the offender. If the king finds the suspect are not guilty, he is sent away; if the king finds him guilty, what he should do is to go through the **law books** to find the **correct judgment** for the criminal offence. These law books are called *paveṇiputtaṭṭhaka*.

If the judgment is not reasonable, people will agitate against the state. **Even the king has no authority to decide punishment**; he has to **refer to the law books**. When the law and order is maintained in this way, people would think that the state is reasonable. If the state does otherwise, people would think that the state is rude; therefore, we should go to the remote area and organize ourselves against the state. Thus, if the law and order is not properly managed, there will be revolution. The **system of Justice** that the **Vajjians** had was the **multiple system of law**. The suspected offender had so many opportunities to prove his innocence. This was the system of law in the sixth century B.C.

=====Note:=====

Prof. Oliver's lecture ended here without completing the other four conditions. The following notes are provided by Suan Bee.

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The Seven Conditions of Welfare

The seven conditions of welfare preached by the Buddha to the Vajjians to be followed is important in evaluating the Buddhist approach to statecraft. When once the Buddha was dwelling in Rajagaha, on the hill called 'Vultures Peak', Ajatasattu, the king of Magadha, desirous of attacking the Vajjians, sent his chief minister, Vassakara, to visit the Buddha and tell him that he (the king) was going to attack the Vajjians. Vassakara thereupon went to the Buddha and exchanged greetings and delivered the message just as the king had commanded him. Ananda was standing behind the Buddha and fanning him. When Vassakara was explaining the king's message, the Buddha in the course of the conversation,

¹This is a system that was also practiced in China; as the legal case goes on, in China, judges were selected from the distinguished families of the society.

inquired of Ananda whether the Vajjians were living up to the Seven Conditions of Welfare (*Satta aparihaniya dhamma*). Ananda answered in the affirmative. They were :

1. *They hold full and frequent public assemblies.*
2. *They meet together in concord, rise in concord and carry out their undertakings in concord.*
3. *They enact nothing not already established, abrogate nothing that has already been enacted, and act in accordance with the ancient institutions of the Vajjians as established in former days.*
4. *They honour, revere and support the Vajjian elders and hold it a point of duty to listen to their words.*
5. *They do not take away by force or abduct women or girls belonging to their clan and detain them.*
6. *They honour, esteem, revere and support the Vajjian shrines whether in town or country, and do not allow them to fall into disuse.*
7. *They fully provide rightful protection, defence and support for the arahants among them, so that arahants from far away may enter the realm and therein live in peace.*

The commentator discusses the seven conditions at length. In accordance with the first, the members share the responsibility to be present when the assembly is convened to discuss the day-to-day events of the confederacy.

While annotating the second, he says that whenever there is an issue of an uprising in any part of their territory, whether in a village or in a frontier province, all agree to go there to punish the culprits. In this way all are united and help each other in times of need.

While discussing the third condition, the commentator gives a long description of their judicial system which can be compared with any system of judicature found in any democracy in the world today. Firstly, the accused is tried by the chief minister of justice or by a panel of two or three judges. Then if he is found not guilty, he is discharged forthwith and if he is found guilty, he is handed over to the *voharikas* without any comment on their part. The *voharikas* are said to be a kind of judge appointed to try cases of a particular nature. The *voharikas* in turn acquit the guiltless, but if he is found guilty, he is to be tried by another court of law occupied by *sutradharas* well versed in legal enactments pertaining to the past, present and future. If they are convinced of the accused's innocence they discharge him. The guilty is again tried by yet another court of law consisting of *atthakulikas* hailing from families attached to legal professions. They are considered to be the experts in law and regarded as impartial in the application of justice without prejudice, anger, fear and ignorance. They are mature in age and altogether eight in number.

Then again if the person is found guilty, he is tried in the court marshal under the supervision of the army commander, who in turn hands over the culprit to the viceroy and he too having tried the accused forward him to be tried by the king, when found guilty.

Finally, the king tries the accused and studies the case very attentively. When found guilty, he punishes him in accordance with the legal measures found in the *Pavenipotthaka* or the Traditional Penal Code, which is read and explained to him.

In this way the Vajjian judicial system consists of seven successive stages. Legal procedure is carried out, for example, levying the death penalty, by the following levels of judiciary:

1. Chief minister of justice
2. *Voharikas* - judges appointed to try cases of a particular nature
3. *Sutradharas* - well versed in past, present and future legal enactments
4. *Atthakulikas* - members of families in the legal profession
5. Army commander
6. Viceroy
7. King

In the end the offender is convinced of his own responsibility for the offence committed by him. The commentary further explains how this legal procedure ensured the growth of the Vajjian kingdom.

4

With regard to the fourth condition of welfare, it is to be emphasized that even though born as royalty, those who disregard the law, the king and the elders, are doomed to failure and decline. If they do not associate with the elders because of their stubbornness, they would not get an opportunity to learn the traditional wisdom in regard to statecraft and the people's welfare.

5

The violation of the fifth is also grave. As revealed in many a Jataka story, kings were notorious in wielding their power to take away girls from their parents' custody and also wives by putting their husbands to death under false charges. The abduction and retaining of women and girls by force would naturally lead to chaos and those affected families would eventually flee to frontier villages and would rebel against the state.

6

With reference to the sixth, the commentary says that gods do not protect those who neglect the long standing rites and rituals' not showing respect for them. Consequently, although they are incapable of making people sick, they are capable of prolonging their ailments. When those deities are honoured and propitiated, they in turn look after those devotees properly and see to their early recovery from their sicknesses. They also assist them to be victorious in war.

According to the commentarial elucidation, it is clear that deities are not capable of making people either unhappy or happy, but they do have the ability to be instrumental in lessening both suffering and happiness influencing a man's life. At the same time it is to be borne in mind that, of retributive actions done in their previous lives, some results are sometimes extremely happy and vice versa even if they have resorted to evil.

7

With regard to the last condition, the commentary explains the implications of "rightful protection, defence and support" in detail. Trees must not be felled in the vicinity of monasteries. Abstention from hunting and using hunting dogs and not allowing fishermen to fish in the ponds and lakes in the monastic surroundings are considered to be rightful protection, defence and support.

These seven conditions of welfare have been enunciated by the Buddha himself in a previous occasion when the Buddha was at *Sarandada Cetiya* in *Vesali*, to be followed for the well-being of the republic. Some scholars have the opinion that the Buddha modelled the Sangha on the conventions found in the Vajjian confederacy. The Buddha also hailed from a republic, but it was of a different kind and under the king of Kosala. Pasenadi Kosala often refers to himself and the Buddha as Khattiyas, Kosalans and octogenarians. The heads of the republics were sometimes referred to by their clan names, such as Sakiya, Malla etc. but in some instances as raja (the king). However the statement in the Sutta Nipata which mentions that the ocean is the head of all rivers and the king is the head of the people, cannot be taken to mean that the Buddha favoured the monarchical system. It could be taken as a general observation. The list of the Ten Duties of a King is the charter to be adhered to by kings. The Universal Monarch is the prototype to be imitated for the sake of good government. Neither favouring nor disparaging either system, monarchical or republican, the Buddha advised the heads of states to be virtuous and rule their kingdoms righteously by maintaining law and order.